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Representative Tim Melton
Chairman of Standing Committee on Education
Michigan House of Representatives
Lansing, MI 48909

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I would like to make two points concerning the proposed legislation (SB 70), one that I hope has implications beyond the current deliberations and one that pertains to this legislation and other actions that may be similar in nature.

To begin I would like to inform the Committee that we have recently formed a professional alliance of college and university professors who research and study reading and other literacy-related matters. The Michigan Alliance of Reading Professors is meant to be a source of information about teacher education in reading and literacy areas as well as the latest research regarding literacy theory and programs that promote literacy for all students. We hope that we will be able to assist all Michigan's educational leaders in making reading and literacy areas of strength recognized across all interest groups. Even as we are organizing, we have representation from over 75% of the college and universities in Michigan. We fully expect to include all state reading and literacy faculties.

As a second point, I would like to suggest that the best educational practice would be to provide legislation encouraging movement toward solid and realistic educational goals. At the same time, I believe that post-secondary education curricula are best determined at the college or university level with the oversight of the Michigan Department of Education. I would not want my physician limited to prescribing just one particular medication to control my diabetes rather than being able to select which of several medications best fits my particular needs. In the same manner, I do not want my university's literacy program or a particular course restricted to a set of topics that must be covered irrespective of the specific needs of groups of teachers. I believe that the legislation being considered as was originally enacted, limits the ability of universities to change curricula to reflect the research findings and practice of the educational community. While universities are traditionally difficult places in which to introduce change, it appears easier than changing laws. I ask that the list of topics that must be included be reduced to areas that should be considered by the Michigan Department of Education in consultation with college and university reading and literacy faculty from around the state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. F. Cipielewski', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James F. Cipielewski, Ph.D.
Michigan Alliance of Reading Professors &
Oakland University